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## **Team Approach to Support Highly Mobile and Homeless Students**

District and school staff can work together to ensure a welcoming environment for students who are highly mobile or homeless. While no one person can meet all the needs of a student who is homeless, a caring and welcoming staff makes a world of a difference to a student struggling with daily survival needs. School staff should consider a team approach to identify students who are homeless and highly mobile, work to meet their basic needs, and create a welcoming environment for these students and their families. A team might consist of the homeless liaison, school administrator, school secretary, nurse, teacher, school counselor, and school social worker.

Below are some tasks team members can undertake to identify the unmet needs of students who are highly mobile and homeless. For additional strategies on educating and helping these students, please visit the online resources provided at the end of the document.

### **Homeless Liaison**

- Ensure that homeless children and youth (including preschool children and unaccompanied youth) are identified and immediately enrolled in school by establishing a referral process with school staff and community agencies.
- Inform parents/student of their educational rights.
- Inform parents/student of transportation rights, including transportation to the school of origin.
- Guarantee that students receive free school meals, school supplies, and course fee waivers.
- Alert appropriate staff, in a confidential manner, of the student's living situation.
- Collaborate with community service providers, school personnel, and the state homeless coordinator to provide homeless children and youth education and related services.

### **Administrator/Principal**

- Communicate to school staff the importance of providing a safe and helpful environment to students who are highly mobile and homeless.
- Extend yourself to the family/student by letting them know your school is a safe and caring place.
- Ensure transportation to allow students/parents to attend school events.
- Encourage parents to volunteer at school and participate in school events.

### **School Secretary/Enrollment Personnel**

- Recognize specific signs a family/student may be homeless. Tactfully inquire about living situations.
- Enroll the student immediately and offer privacy and assistance in completing enrollment forms.
- Refer the family or unaccompanied youth to the district homeless liaison to discuss the student's educational rights under the McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Act.

- Be sensitive and caring in your attitude and approach. You may be the first person the family or unaccompanied youth interacts with—you may make the difference in how the family and youth feel about their new school.

### **School Nurse**

- Verify immunization records and check for other health issues.
- Identify students with mental/psychological concerns. Refer student to appropriate professionals.
- Follow-up with healthcare concerns.
- Refer the family or youth to community resources that provide health benefits such as BadgerCare, dental care, Medicaid, physicals, Supplemental Security Insurance (SSI), Women-Infant-Children (WIC), and other community health programs.

### **Teacher**

- Be familiar with the common characteristics of students who are homeless. Please refer to [http://www.dpi.wi.gov/homeless/ppt/tway\\_teachers2.pps](http://www.dpi.wi.gov/homeless/ppt/tway_teachers2.pps) for best practices and other strategies.
- Identify areas of academic strengths and limitations for students and communicate with parents about their child's school performance.
- Connect students and parents with tutoring, mentoring, and extended day programs if needed.
- Adjust assignments to allow homeless and highly mobile students to complete them at school.
- Keep school supplies, snacks, clothes and other basic necessities on hand for students who may need them. Find quiet ways to distribute these resources.
- Reinforce the positive aspects of the student's academic and social skills while strengthening areas in need of improvement.
- Provide extra encouragement and attention to students who are highly mobile and homeless.

### **School Counselor**

- Introduce yourself to the student and family as an advocate for them.
- Monitor academic progress, offer support services, and assure students access to all programs and extracurricular activities.
- Offer support for the social/emotional (safety, security, and belonging) needs of students.
- Refer the family/student to community agencies for psychological/mental health support if required.
- Check-in frequently with highly mobile and homeless students to gauge their adjustment to their new surroundings.

### **School Social Worker**

- Assist families in identifying community services and resources.
- Consult with teachers, administrators, and parents about academic performance and behavior.
- Participate in crisis intervention teams for referrals, e.g., abuse, neglect, and suicide risk.
- Coordinate with the court, child welfare, and juvenile justice systems, as appropriate, to support highly-mobile and homeless student's success in school.

It is important for team members to meet regularly to discuss and problem-solve the academic, social, and emotional progress of students who are highly mobile and homeless. Team members should also discuss activities to increase parental involvement, ways to build community partnerships, and other ideas to increase student and family stability.

**Department of Public Instruction Online Resources**

- Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction: <http://www.dpi.wi.gov>
- Education for Homeless Children and Youth Program:  
<http://www.dpi.wi.gov/homeless/index.html>

**For additional information please contact:**

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